

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A seat belt warning apparatus for a vehicle occupant, comprising:
 - a seat belt;
 - an audible indicator for generating an alert sound; and
 - a controller for providing via the audible indicator, either one of a first audible alert corresponding to a first warning level and a second audible alert corresponding to a second warning level that is higher than the first warning level when the seat belt is unbuckled, the controller being adapted to sound a first alert chime by repeating an alert sound having prescribed frequency and volume at a first cycle during the first audible alert, and a second alert chime by repeating the same alert sound at a second cycle that is different from the first cycle, during the second audible alert, wherein the controller is further adapted to sound the first alert chime via the audible indicator in an initial stage of the second audible alert, prior to sounding the second alert chime.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Original) A seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the controller is further adapted to activate the first audible alert in response to detecting the seat belt being unbuckled upon turning on the ignition of the vehicle, and activate the second audible alert in response to detecting the seat belt being unbuckled when the vehicle is running at a prescribed speed or more.
4. (Original) A seat belt warning apparatus for a vehicle occupant, comprising:
 - a seat belt;
 - an audible indicator for generating an alert sound;

a controller for providing via the audible indicator, either one of a first audible alert corresponding to a first warning level and a second audible alert corresponding to a second warning level that is higher than the first warning level when the seat belt is unbuckled, the controller being adapted to sound via the audible indicator an alert chime corresponding to the first warning level before an alert chime corresponding to the second warning level during the second audible alert.

5. (Currently Amended) A method of providing a vehicle occupant with a first audible alert corresponding to a first warning level or a second audible alert corresponding to a second warning level that is higher than the first warning level, to alert the vehicle occupant that his or her seat belt is unbuckled, the method comprising the steps of:

sounding a first alert chime by repeating an alert sound having prescribed frequency and volume at a first cycle during the first audible alert; and

sounding a second alert chime by repeating the same alert sound at a second cycle during the second audible alert, wherein the first alert chime is sounded in an initial stage of the second audible alert prior to sounding the second alert chime.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A method as set forth in ~~claim 6~~ claim 5, wherein the first audible alert is activated in response to detecting the seat belt being unbuckled upon turning on the ignition of the vehicle, and

the second audible alert is activated in response to detecting the seat belt being unbuckled when the vehicle is running at a prescribed speed or more.

8. (Original) A method of providing a vehicle occupant with a first audible alert corresponding to a first warning level or a second audible alert corresponding to a second warning level that is higher than the first warning level, to alert the vehicle occupant that his or her seat belt is unbuckled, wherein

during the second audible alert, an alert chime corresponding to the first waning level is sounded before an alert chime corresponding to the second warning level.

9. (New) The seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein once the second audible alert has been sounded, the controller will not base further activation of the second audible alert on vehicle speed.

10. (New) The seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second audible alert sounds the first alert chime for a first period of time and immediately sounds the second alert chime for a consecutive, second period of time.

11. (New) The seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein the second repetition cycle is about three times shorter than the first repetition cycle.

12. (New) The seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 4, wherein once the second audible alert has been sounded, the controller will not base further activation of the second audible alert on vehicle speed.

13. (New) The seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 4, wherein the second audible alert sounds the first alert chime for a first period of time and immediately sounds the second alert chime for a consecutive, second period of time.

14. (New) A method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the second audible alert sounds the first alert chime for a first period of time and immediately sounds the second alert chime for a consecutive, second period of time.

15. (New) A method as set forth in claim 5, wherein the second repetition cycle is about three times shorter than the first repetition cycle.

16. (New) A method as set forth in claim 7, wherein once the ignition has been turned on and the second alert has been activated a first time, subsequent activation of the second audible alert is not based on vehicle speed.

17. (New) A method as set forth in claim 7, wherein upon buckling of the seat belt, the respective first or second audible alert activated is shut off.

18. (New) A method as set forth in claim 17, wherein upon subsequent detection of the seat belt being unbuckled, the second audible alert is activated.

19. (New) A method as set forth in claim 8, wherein the second audible alert sounds the first alert chime for a first period of time and immediately sounds the second alert chime for a consecutive, second period of time.

20. (New) A method as set forth in claim 8, wherein upon buckling of the seat belt, the respective first or second audible alert activated is shut off.

21. (New) A method as set forth in claim 20, wherein upon subsequent detection of the seat belt being unbuckled, the second audible alert is activated.

22. (New) The seat belt warning apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein the alert sound is a composite sound formed from at least two frequencies chimed with a predetermined duty ratio, and a second audible alert repetition cycle is shorter than a first audible alert repetition cycle.